Agricultural Day Laborers: Labor Struggles Against Precarious Work and Agribusiness Exploitation

Guillermo Castillo Ramírez

Thursday 27 January 2022, posted by Guillermo Castillo Ramírez

Among the occupations with very low pay and high risks, agricultural laborers are one of the most numerous jobs, without social rights and with very precarious wages. According to different sources (such as *La Jornada*), the number of people who, in alarming conditions of poverty and marginalization, work in this type of laboral occupations in Mexico is estimated at about 3 million; and, a large part of them are from the south of the country (Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas), and originating from indigenous contexts. In this context, the book *Jornaleros agrícolas: Explotación trasnacional* (2021), by the journalist Kau Sirenio, was recently published and presented.

Within the framework of the agroindustry production of vegetables and other crops in Mexico and the United States, this investigative journalism work addresses, from this journalist's own experience as a worker in the fields of cultivation, the processes of labor exploitation and suffering of the day laborers of rural peasant origin (many of them of indigenous origin, and from southern Mexico). This book, collecting the voices of day laborers, has three relevant and very current merits.

– (1) On the one hand, it accounts for the intense and drastic dynamics of change in the Mexican countryside. Especially in relation to how the deterioration of peasant economies and localities (due to neoliberal policies and the consequent deterioration of the rural productive apparatus) is linked to the rise of agroindustry's fields, while impoverished peasants became precarious day laborers. , with very bad salaries. Day laborers were and are, in a forced way, the producers of corporate wealth, through exploitation on which the lowering of production costs and the dynamics of capital accumulation are based.

– (2) On the other hand, this work, through the knowledge of various day laborers and their organizations, clearly shows the demands of these workers. Said claims range from fairer wages (better paid), 8-hour working days with legal benefits (Christmas bonus, vacations, among others) and safety conditions (no exposure to agrochemicals), to the organization of trade unions itself, termination the mistreatment and eradication of the structural and generalized sexual harassment and abuse of female day laborers.

– (3) Finally, and from a deliberately political commitment and positioned from and with day laborers, this text not only shows the processes of exploitation, mistreatment, racism and violence suffered by day laborers. Also, and fundamentally, it narrates and puts in the center their demands, struggles and organizational processes from their own voices and experiences.

This is a book written from the furrows and the direct experience of exploitation and misery wages, which, by denouncing and remembering the resistance, bets on better working and living conditions for day laborers.

In memory of the 56 migrants who died on December 9, 2021 in Chiapas. They, like millions of people in different regions of the world, left their homes and communities in search of better living conditions. His death, unnecessary and unjustly cruel, is the result, both of human trafficking networks (with their cynical thirst for profit at the cost of human lives), and of regional policies to control cross-border mobility (with their explicit purpose of criminalization of migrants).